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*Helping People Help the Land...*

**SUBJECT:** Activities Report, January 1 – March 31, 2006

**DATE:** April 5, 2006

**TO:** Rhode Island Conservation Partnership

## **DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST REPORT**

### **EASTERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT (ERICD), by Michael Kenyon, Acting District Conservationist**

In January, four clients were assisted by staff with Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) recommendations and evaluations. Staff also assisted previous year Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) on five occasions, Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) on two occasions, Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) on one occasion, and seven instances of Conservation Technical Assistance.

In February, the staff conducted twenty-six evaluations of the EQIP applications that were received. A majority of staff time was dedicated to plan development for both EQIP and WHIP. One of the previous years, EQIP was significantly revised to include Technical Service Provider (TSP) funding in order to complete the engineering on the large dairy facility. Fence and Nutrient Management include some of the practices that were installed in the district.

In March, the staff evaluated eighteen Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification determinations. In addition, five existing clients contacted the office with interest in installing their practices that are eligible as part of the energy incentive. EQIP and WHIP applications were ranked. Fifteen EQIP applications were approved for contract development. There were two instances of assistance with the Wetland Reserve Program, one instance of assistance with the Drought Assistance Program, two instances of assistance with previous years Agricultural Management Assistance program, five instances of assistance with the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, and sixteen instances of Conservation Technical Assistance. Pest Management, Nutrient Management, and pipeline for livestock watering systems were applied through-out the month.

### **NORTHERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT (NRICD), by Michael Merrill, District Conservationist**

Currently, 78 contracts are active and being managed in Providence County. These include:

<b>Program</b>	<b>AMA</b>	<b>CRP</b>	<b>CSP</b>	<b>DAP</b>	<b>EQIP</b>	<b>GRP</b>	<b>SWCA</b>	<b>WHIP</b>	<b>WRP</b>
<b>Contracts</b>	5	1	3	6	35	2	1	25	0

Prior to the February 10<sup>th</sup> application deadline, we received 27 EQIP and 19 WHIP applications. Preliminary Conservation Plans were developed for these applicants. After ranking 11 WHIP and 11 EQIP applications were selected for funding. Conservation Plans and contracts are being finalized for signature by the client and NRCS.

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) deadline ended March 31<sup>st</sup> and 7 applications were received. All seven CSP interviews were scheduled and completed. Applications included lands in pasture, hay, orchard, and vegetables. All applications had fields that met minimum eligibility requirements. After the interviews, it was determined that two applicants were eligible at Tier I, one at Tier II and four at Tier III. Contracts will be developed and will await announcement of the funding levels and categories from the national office.

For 2004 and older EQIP contracts certain conservation practices will be eligible for a 15% increase in payments due to energy cost increases if they finish the project prior to June 30<sup>th</sup>. Nine clients are eligible and all responded to letters requesting assistance to complete their projects by the deadline. These projects include pipeline, fencing, heavy use areas, composting pads, and agricultural waste storage facilities.

The Pocasset River Floodplain hydrology model was updated by Rhode Island staff with assistance from GZA Geo-Environmental Engineering. The model was re-run and the result more closely mimicked field observations collected in October of 2005. Rhode Island staff presented the final Hydrology and Hydraulic models to the Rhode Island State Conservation Engineer and other CT Engineering Staff for final approval.

The Woonasquatucket fish passage projects are continuing to move forward. Two more obstructions along the lower sections have been approved for WHIP funding, so that now the first three obstructions have cooperative landowners with partial funding from NRCS. Discussions with the consultants on the preliminary reviews of alternatives at Paragon Dam are ongoing. The Rising Sun Mills Dam fish ladder wetlands permit will be submitted in early April. Funding from the RI Trust Fund has been secured to help with the installation costs. Sediment sampling behind and near the dams will be sampled and potential analyzed by the regional EPA laboratory in MA.

#### **SOUTHERN RHODE ISLAND CONSERVATION DISTRICT (SRICD), by Michael Kenyon, District Conservationist**

In January, the staff conducted seven site evaluations as part of the Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP). In addition, significant implementation occurred on one of the previous years Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP) projects. Documentation on work completed was evaluated and reimbursement process began. This activity resulted in additional Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) to assist in updating the client's enrollment with the state's Farm, Forest, and Open Space Program, which offers tax breaks on land that is protected.

In February, the staff conducted forty-nine evaluations as part of EQIP applications that were received in the district. A dozen of WHIP applications were also evaluated. Most of the staff dedicated a majority of their time in developing plans because of the applications.

In March, the staff evaluated two rain gardens. The staff also were contacted by six clients with interest in installing their practices that are eligible as part of the energy incentive. EQIP and WHIP applications were ranked resulting in twenty-five being approved for contract development. One of the EQIP applications was from the Narragansett Indian Tribe, which is recognized nationally. This application was later approved for contract development. This contract included such practices and invasive removal, buffer establishment, and streambank

stabilization. Applied practices included Fence, Prescribed Grazing, Pest Management, Brush Management and sixty-eight acres of WHIP recommendations.

**EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM (ETVP), by Jeanne Comerford, Public Affairs Specialist**

January through March 2006, RI NRCS used 26 volunteers for a total of 210 hours to assist with implement NRCS programs/services

**ECOLOGICAL SCIENCES, by J. Eric Scherer, State Resource Conservationist**

**EFOTG:** The NRCS Rhode Island Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG) was updated with the following changes:

**Section III:** New Conservation Guide Sheets (CSGs) have been developed for both Multiple Land Resource Areas in Rhode Island for Shellfish production (Domestic Animals) and Threatened and Endangered Species as well as for Eelgrass Restoration. These new CSGs now can be linked to the appropriate land uses and resource concerns in the conservation planning process.

**Section IV:** Over 30 Enhancement Activity worksheets were developed for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) in preparation for client interviews. Worksheets covered Air, Pest, Nutrient, Habitat and Grazing activities. A Job Sheet for Deer Fencing has also been drafted for use in FY 2006 EQIP contracts.

**BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES, by Andrew Lipsky, State Biologist**

The Rhode Island office of the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) opened its FY 2006 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for the first time to aquaculturists in the state. In order to assist NRCS to effectively address the unique resource issues associated with freshwater and marine aquaculture in Rhode Island, NRCS and the University of Rhode Island (URI) entered into a cooperative agreement for the development of technical information for use by NRCS staff and Rhode Island freshwater and marine aquaculture producers. Under this agreement, technical assistance from URI and Roger Williams University will result in the development, application, and evaluation of "Best Management Practices" (BMP's) for use in small-scale aquaculture operations in RI. Along with technical guidance documents, these BMP's will be incorporated into new and modified NRCS conservation practice standards.

A team composed of partners from RIDEM, the Rhode Island Coastal Resource Management Council (CRMC), Roger Williams University, and URI, worked to initiate a pilot EQIP program relevant to shellfish producers in RI. NRCS held several planning meetings and worked to develop a suite of conservation practice best management practices that could be cost shared with RI shellfish growers. This year's EQIP program was based upon the highly successful Massachusetts EQIP pilot project in Cape Cod. As a result, our team was able to develop a shellfish management conservation practice standard that would address the uniqueness of the RI shellfish farming industry and the particular resource concerns in RI waters. We developed a practice standard to fit the conditions found within Rhode Island for the protection of water quality by controlling oil and gasoline emissions from outboard motors, endangered species through gear management, and the health of wild and farmed shellfish populations through record keeping and disease monitoring.

NRCS RI staff was selected to be part of a national standard review team to update and modify the Fish Passage Conservation Practice Standard 396. Updates to the standard were made by the team and it is now out for national review.

**Economics:** Staff has modified cost list to add new practices and modify existing practices via late comments from program managers. Several shell-fishing practices were added to the list.

Staff drafted a spreadsheet for workload analysis that contains data on all work done to a contract—work load for District Conservationist, Soil Conservationist, engineers, and Cultural Resources in one place. Compiled the list of practices planned and not certified from protracts and inserting estimated staff hours from the TACCP spreadsheet. Provided a summary to STC outlining/summarizing the number of practices planned and not certified as listed in Protracts from 2003 to 2006.

Staff updated Producer statistics and completed Producer Eligibility forms and checked all EQIP applicants to insure they meet producer criteria; reviewed sources to estimate oyster prices.

Staff developed set of questions regarding the costs and benefits rotational grazing and continuous grazing to query a few clients. Part of Business plan duties to estimate the benefits and costs of switching to IRG from continuous grazing. Questionnaire developed for dairy and beef cattle, sheep, and general livestock.

**Cultural Resources (CR):** Staff continues to work on consistency of reporting/recording CR requirements for contracts.

Staff coordinated and assembled a presentation for the CR training at Sturbridge, MA for the Soil and Water Conservation Society. The workshop was attended by 60 NRCS employees from Southern New England and New Hampshire.

Staff coordinated and worked with field staff to review client contracts able to benefit from the energy initiative program and provided field staff with list of practices that are still in need of cultural resource surveys before project can commence.

**NEPA Environmental Assessment Flow Diagrams:** Staff traveled to Greensboro for week long working meeting with representatives from the other New England States and staff from the ENTSC to complete Environmental Assessment (EA) flow diagrams to meet NEPA requirements. Staff completed modifications to EA diagrams for the 10 conservation practices as committed to by the Rhode Island State office. Staff modified EA diagrams via comments from the meeting in Greensboro.

**NEPA EA Conservation Practice Information Sheets:** Developed Practice Information sheets for ten conservation practices. These sheets provide information to public inquiry that might arise concerning the practice. It includes written description and visual media to convey the practice. Solicited information from technical staff to obtain a list of associated practices to each of the conservation practices for which an EA is being drafted.

Reorganized Civil Rights related information so that information is properly displayed as applicable for to the public and personnel.

### **ENGINEERING, by Frank Vogel, Assistant State Engineer**

**RI NRCS Long-Range Water Resources Plan:** This 3-5 year projection identified watershed planning and operations workload, priorities and funding for water resources related projects. It was forwarded to National HQ on February 22, 2006.

**Pocasset Floodplain Management Study (FPMS):** The Hydrology model was updated by Rhode Island staff with assistance from GZA Geo-Environmental Engineering. Additional storage areas were added to the upper reaches of the model to account for storage behind a number of structures. The model was re-run and the result more closely mimicked field observations collected in October of 2005. Rhode Island staff presented the final Hydrology and Hydraulic models to the Connecticut Engineering Staff for final approval. Tentative final

approval was given by the Rhode Island State Conservation Engineer. Rhode Island staff will complete the Hydrology/Hydraulic Report for final review by the State Conservation Engineer. GZA was given approval to use the model to begin development of the preliminary designs and analysis for the selected alternatives.

**Pawcatuck Watershed Water Use Stakeholders Group/Optimization Project:** Vicky Drew and Michael Kenyon participated in the update meeting at USGS's office in Providence. Discussion on completing the project and funding that remains were topics that were discussed. The steering committee will determine what reports were going to be included within the final report.

**Emergency Watershed Program (EWP):** Site investigations and evaluations were performed at the Baker Street Brook and Canna Street areas of West Warwick, RI for possible candidates for the EWP. Both sites were deemed ineligible due to a combination of insufficient economic benefit to cost ratios as well as the absence of watershed impairments as described in the national EWP manual. The Town of West Warwick will investigate local flood proofing efforts to mitigate flooding in the worst cases.

**Engineering Services:** The Source Selection Board met and determined the best qualified engineering firm (out of ten applicants) for the award of the Indefinite Quantity/Indefinite Delivery (IDIQ) contract to perform engineering planning, survey, design, and construction services for projects funded through WHIP, WRP, EQIP, and other NRCS programs. NRCS Massachusetts Contracting will make contract award as soon as final changes and edits are made to the Statement of Work.

#### **GRAZING LAND CONSERVATION INITIATIVE (GLCI), by Michael Merrill**

Meat processing seminar sponsored by DEM, Division of Agriculture was held for livestock producers who may want to participate in selling local products. The year-end report sent to the National GLCI Coordinator.

#### **FARM BILL PROGRAMS, by Vicky Drew and Joe Bachand**

**Conservation Security Program (CSP):** Sign up for the FY 2006 program was announced in February and extended through the end of March. Program manager developed and finalized cost and new enhancement list for current year, processed and responded to all national bulletins, trained staff on changes to program, and prepared interview materials. Outreach mailing sent to all potentially eligible landowners in the Woonasquatucket, Moshassuck, and Pawtuxet River watersheds. District Conservationist (DC) prepared for and presented information on the program to the RI Fruit Growers Association. Program manager and DC interviewed all applicants last week in March. Applications loaded to Protracts for national selection based on funding limits and category placement.

**Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP):** Outreach mailing sent to all producers in the state. Workshop held the end of January to discuss the program, with over 100 in participation. Received and processed 102 applications for FY 2006, a dramatic increase from earlier years. Program staff worked with the Farm Service Agency and individual applicants to complete and process all associated paperwork for each applicant. All applications were ranked, and the highest ranked 55 were selected for funding. Letters developed and sent to all deferred, ineligible and pre-approved applicants.

The new national ranking tool was adapted for use with the RI EQIP program and tested on all Providence County applicants. A report summarizing the shortcomings and recommended changes to the ranking tool was sent to the national office. The national ranking tool will be used for all EQIP, AMA and WHIP rankings in FY 2007.

**Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP):** NRCS received 59 applications for the WHIP Program totaling in excess of 4 million dollars. All applications were ranked for the FY2006 ranking period. There were 31 application pre-approved for funding totaling over 1.8 million dollars. The filed planners will be working with the applicants to develop the final conservation plans, cost estimates, and contracts. All project funds will need to be obligated by June 1, 2006.

**WHIP Ranking Tool:** In FY 2007 all application will be ranked by the planners using the new "Ranking Tool" within the "Protracts" contracting software. Rhode WHIP Program staff has developed and is currently piloting the ranking tool to compare it to the existing ranking process. The tool has four ranking areas in which points can be assigned: conservation practice environmental cost/benefits analysis, local issues, state issues, and national issues. The conservation practice cost/benefit analysis will be used to determine the effectiveness of the selected practices in addressing the specific "Resource Concern". The greater impact on the resource concern the higher the ranking for the project. The local and state issues will be developed by the State Office with assistance from the partners. The National issues were given to the states by our National Office and are based on the National WHIP Goals. WHIP Program management staff will hold an informational meeting to review the new tool and get comments from our partners.

**Grassland Reserve Program (GRP):** Program and field staff moving forward to close on the Robinson Farm (owned by the Bowers Family), located in South Kingstown. Program staff secured title search, title insurance commitment and easement boundary survey.

**Farm and Ranch land Protection Program (FRPP):** National Announcement of Program Funding was released the end of March with a May 11 deadline. Letters and fact sheets about the announcement and changes to the program were distributed to all land trusts, municipalities and the RI Agricultural Land Preservation Commission. Answered phone calls and emails regarding the announcement and program changes, as needed, from partnering entities.

**Wetland Reserve Program (WRP):** NRCS staff is currently working on reviewing and ranking WRP applications for FY2006. Selected applicant will be notified in the next 30 days. All WRP contracts must be obligated by June 1, 2006.

Field staff continues to work on Gooseneck Cove, Walkers Farm, and Jacob Point marsh restoration projects.

The final work is being completed to acquire the Barton Farm Easement. The closing should occur in the next six weeks.

#### **OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS, by Jeanne Comerford)**

Jim Turenne completed educational soils, Ground Penetrating Radar, and Electro-magnetic Induction demonstration for the URI's Geology Department. In addition, Jim completed hydric soils and wetland delineation presentation for URI Wetland Ecology class. Jim made a presentation of Soil survey and mapping class for URI Soil Morphology and Mapping class.

<b>OUTREACH EVENTS</b>	<b>ATTENDEES</b>
January 5, VRS System for RI meeting .....	14
January 9, Hands-on workshop- Preparing Grant Applications .....	40
January 12, RC&D Open House .....	24
January 17, Farm & Ranch magazine article (Jessie Dutra).....	100,000
January 13, RI Farm Viability committee meeting .....	20
January 18, Feasibility meeting for value-added wool project .....	21

January 23, RI Current use assessment.....	13
January 24, RI Farm ways agritourism training & professional development .....	50
January 26, Meat producers co-op meeting .....	45
January 26, Fiscal impact analysis of development.....	11
January 28, Soils talk to forest landowners .....	23
January 31, Hands-on workshop - Farm Bill Program Applications.....	125
February 1, RC&D program activities and initiatives .....	8
February 23, RI MapCoast & Bay Map annual conference .....	45
March 3, RI Natural Heritage Annual Conference .....	100
March 8, URI Career Day .....	150
March 11, RI Land & Water Conservation Summit.....	115
March 16, Discussion of Conservation Easement Programs.....	50
March 16, RI Ag Council meeting .....	52
March 17, Forestry-Wood Expo: 100 gifts from RI Forests.....	32
March 18, RC&D Project development – Wool blankets .....	40
March 23, RI Fruit Growers meeting.....	46
March 30, Soils talk.....	53

Eight press releases were written and submitted to partners and local papers with information on programs deadline and success stories.

Annual summary reports on our conservation programs were developed and sent to partners and legislators.

MAPCOAST packets were developed and sent to interested partners.

### **OPERATIONS, by Jackie Pashnik**

#### **Personnel Actions:**

- ♦ Brenda Venable was selected as the Accounting Technician/Program Assistant, effective 4/16/2006.
- ♦ Kelly Zanger was hired as an intermittent Soil Conservation Technician through 9/30/2006.
- ♦ Ruthie Davis and Lori Hillman, Soil Conservationists from Virginia, have accepted an eight-week detail to RI to help out with our conservation planning backlog, effective 3/27/2006.
- ♦ Vacant Civil Engineer position was re-advertised the after first round yielded no eligible applicants.
- ♦ Reena Shaw, Economist, was appointed as a member of the MA-RI Civil Rights Committee
- ♦ Michelle Moore, Secretary, was appointed to the MA-RI Civil Rights Committee as the Disability Emphasis Program Manager
- ♦ Jeanne Comerford, PAS, was appointed to the MA-RI Civil Rights committee as the Asian American/Pacific Islander Program Manager

**Performance Goals:**

Performance Summary Status through March 31, 2005	Goal	Total Progress	Progress Percent
CNMP Applied (No.)	10		
CNMP Written (No.)	9	1	11
Conservation Plans for Cropland Written (Ac.)	1,000	502	50
Conservation Plans for Grazing Land Written (Ac.)	400	159	39
Farmland & Grazing Land Protected by Conservation Easements (Ac.)	158	31	19
Grazing land with Conservation Applied (Ac.)	185	148	80
Irrigation Efficiency Improved (Ac-Ft)	15	6	38
Local Businesses Created in Rural Communities through RC&D Assistance (No.)	4		
Performance Summary Status through March 31, 2005	Goal	Total Progress	Progress Percent
Local Jobs Created in Rural Communities through RC&D Assistance (No.)	8		
Non-fed. Land Managed for the Protection & Enhancement of Habitat for Species with Declining Populations (Ac.)	7,430	754	10
Non-fed. Land Treated for Fish & Wildlife Habitat (Ac.)	535	328	61
Prime, Unique, and Important Farmland Protected by Conservation Easements from Conversion to Non-Agricultural Uses (Ac.)	89		
Reduction in Cropland Soils Damaged by Erosion (Ac.)	100		
Soil Erosion Reduced (Tons)	310	13	4
Soil Surveys Mapped or Updated (Ac.)	1,000		
Watershed or Area-Wide Conservation Plans Developed for Water or Air Quality (Ac.)	79,000		
Watershed or Area-Wide Conservation Plans Developed for Water or Air Quality (No.)	9		
Watershed or Area-Wide Resource Plans, Studies or Inventories for Flood Prevention or Mitigation (No.)	3		
Watershed or Area-Wide Resource Plans, Studies or Inventories - Water Conservation & Water Supply (No.)	1		
Wetlands Created, Restored or Enhanced (Ac.)	130	125	96
Wetlands Protected by 30-year or Perm. Easements (Ac.)	29		



### **Training, Conferences, and Meetings Attended**

- ♦ Certified Crop Advisor Training, Drew
- ♦ Concrete Fundamentals, Vogel
- ♦ Conservation Innovation Grants Training, Drew
- ♦ Conservation Standards, Scherer, Schmidt
- ♦ Contracting Officers Representative (COR) Mentor course, Shaw
- ♦ Cultural Resources, Modules 7 & 8, Shaw, Giorgi, Boettger, Richard, Modisette
- ♦ Easement Acquisition, Modisette
- ♦ FFIS Training, Lathum
- ♦ Fundamentals of Writing, Moore
- ♦ GSA 101, Pashnik, Moore
- ♦ Introduction to Government Contracts, Pashnik
- ♦ Land and Water Summit, Modisette, Drew, Lipsky, Bachand
- ♦ NASIS Regional Meeting, Turenne
- ♦ National RC&D Forum, Modisette
- ♦ NEPA, Shaw
- ♦ New England NACD Meeting, Rides at the Door
- ♦ Operating AgLearn , Colby
- ♦ RI Center for Commercial Agriculture and Education Meeting, Drew
- ♦ Transferring the Farm Training (URI), Drew
- ♦ Report Writing, Comerford

### **RI RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT (RC&D), by Chris Modisette, RC&D Coordinator**

**RC&D Open House:** The RI RC&D Open House was held on January 12, 2006. Approximately 60 individuals from a variety of agencies have been invited and 25 attended. Three (3) of these individuals have expressed interest in participating on the RC&D Council.

**Rhode Island Surplus Wool Project:** Rhode Island sheep farmers are having difficulty selling their wool. A meeting to promote the project to Rhode Island sheep farmers was held on January 18, 2006 at the Laurel Grange, Harmony, RI. The RI Division of Agriculture co-sponsored the meeting. Approximately 20 sheep farmers attended the meeting. A steering committee to move the project forward has been formed.

A presentation on the project was made at the Annual meeting of the Rhode Island Sheep Cooperative on March 18, 2006 and based upon the interest generated at this meeting, the Steering Committee is moving forward with the project. Wool collection is anticipated to occur in mid-June with a target date for completed blankets in early October.

In support of this effort the RC&D Council has applied for a USDA Rural Development Rural Business Enterprise Grant.

RC&D sees an opportunity to create a beautiful blanket that can bring more income to farmers while at the same time promoting the sustainability of local agriculture and agricultural products.

Current Partners include RIDEM – Division of Agriculture, USDA-NRCS, RI RC&D Council, the RI Sheep Cooperative, and the University of Rhode Island Textile and Fashion merchandising Department..

**Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP):** RI RC&D assists the RIDEM – Division of Forest Environment (RIDFE) with the implementation of the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) by administering cost-share payments to eligible forest landowners for completed FLEP practices as approved by RIDFE.

The purpose of the FLEP is to provide a coordinated and cooperative Federal, State, and local sustainable forestry program for the establishment, maintenance, enhancement, and restoration of forests on non-industrial private forest land.

1. In 2006 twenty (20) landowners owning a total of 1,737 acres received \$15,786 of cost-share assistance for the preparation of forest stewardship plans. To date the program has enrolled 3,452 acres of forestland involving 45 forest landowners who received \$23,037 of cost-share assistance.
2. Provided technical assistance to the RI Farm, Forest & Open Space Valuation Subcommittee in the calculation of annual current use assessment values for forestland

**Wood-Pawcatuck Stream Continuity Project:**

Develop sub-watershed Plan(s) to assist Trout Unlimited and the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association to assess and improve stream continuity in the 33,750 acre Upper Wood River Watershed)

1. Developed objectives, priority area(s), resource concerns, Scope of Work, Inventory, and Time Lines with Partners;
2. Provide training & assistance to volunteers in inventory methods, procedures, etc
3. Coordinate volunteers and/or interns to conduct inventory of 150 + stream culvert sites
4. Inventoried 140 to date
5. Obtained an intern (Kate Weiss) from the URI Department of Natural Resources Science who is assisting with this project. She is assisting with survey GPS Points, ata compilation, preparation of a project poster for the RINHS Annual meeting, and preparation of a PowerPoint presentation on the project;
6. RIDEM – Div. of Forest Environment provided preliminary site plans for two (2) bridges in the Arcadia management Area that are slated for repair.
7. We prepared and presented a poster on the project at the Rhode Island Natural History Survey Annual Meeting on March 3, 2006.

**Celebrating Gifts from Rhode Island's Forests:** April 6, 2006 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the State of Rhode Island's forestry program. In recognition of this landmark, RC&D and RIDEM-Division of Forest Environment (RIDFE) in conjunction with the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts are developing an event that celebrates this milestone by obtaining highlighting gifts from Rhode Island's forests. These gifts will be original works of art artist coming from Rhode Island's forest.

In conjunction with this project, RC&D worked with RIDFE to design a centennial logo and poster for this year's celebrations.



Photograph: American Forest, Rhode Island. Courtesy of Salisbury Museum, 2002

Rhode Island State Forestry *Celebrating 100 Years of Service*



**Rural Fire Protection Program:** RI RC&D is providing assistance for the development of dry hydrants in communities that do not have pressurized water available when and where fire protection is needed. A dry hydrant is a non-pressurized, low-cost pipe system installed and connected to a source of water, usually a pond. Many rural towns do not have strategically placed pressurized fire hydrants in their communities and must rely on farm ponds, small streams, and even swimming pools to provide water in the event of a fire.

1. Designed and produced 200 Dry Hydrant Guidance Manuals with the assistance of RIDEM-Divisions of Forest Environment and Freshwater Wetlands
2. Solicit Requests for Area (Dry-hydrant) Plans
3. Received requests for six (6) plans
4. Scheduled meeting to identify area plans with the assistance of the Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs - Forest Fire Advisory Committee and RIDEM-Division of Forest Environment.

**2006 Forestry & Wood Expo:** RI RC&D partnered with the Rhode Island Forest Conservator's Organization, RIDEM-Division of Forest Environment, RI Rural Development Council, Southern New England Forest Consortium, Inc. and the RI Tree Farm Committee to sponsor the 2006 Forestry & Wood Expo at the CCRI-Knight Campus in Warwick on April 7 & 8, 2006. The expo featured a series of seminars, workshops, as well as business luncheon to highlight the contribution of the forestry and wood products to Rhode Island's economy. The expo also served as the kick-off event to the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of forestry in Rhode Island. Expo highlights included:

- 160 students & teachers from 7 schools for School to Career presentation
- Attendance and presentation by Governor Donald Carcieri at the Business Luncheon
- Lt. Governor Charles Fogarty moderated the Business Roundtable
- Attendance RIDEM Director Michael Sullivan and Acting State Forester Catherine Sparks

- 8 Workshops attended by 160 people
- 22 Exhibitors
- 2 day conference attendance of approximately 600 people

**Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Manual:** The Rhode Island Soil Erosion & Sediment Control Manual has not been updated since 1989. RI RC&D is:

1. Research funding availability with RIDEM and USEPA Region 1
2. Investigating feasibility of a multi-state SE&SC publication with CT/MA/RI

**Increased public awareness of the role and activities of RI RC&D Council**

1. Developed a generic RC&D presentation for use at various functions. To date presentations have been requested and given to the following groups:  
***RC&D Open House, "Rhody Warm" Committee, Tree Farm Committee, RIFCO Woodland Owner Workshop Series, NRICD Meeting, RI Sheep Cooperative Annual Meeting, Ocean Wood Turners, and the RI Christmas Tree Growers***
2. Developing a ***RC&D Informational Program*** that describes programs and accomplishments to include:
  - Developed a generic RC&D presentation for use at various functions
  - Developed RC&D website
  - Updated RC&D brochure
  - Produced and distributed RC&D Fall/Winter Newsletter
  - Developed fact sheets on RC&D projects to include; Rhody Warm, Forestry & Wood Expo.
  - Developed an ***Annual Program Report***
3. Attendance and presentation at a variety of organizations, associations, and industry groups to promote RI RC&D to include: See No. 2 above, plus RI Farm, Forest & Open Space Valuation Sub-committee, RI Land Trust Council – Presentations on NRCS programs, RICAPE FarmWays Meeting, RI Natural History Survey Annual meeting, RI Land and Water Summit, Clean Water Festival, March 14, 2005
4. Co-sponsor workshops, events, etc. with current partners
  - RIFCO Woodland Owner Workshop Series
  - 2006 Forestry & Wood Expo
  - 2006 Envirothon Competition

**SOILS PROGRAM, by Jim Turenne**

**Map Coast:** The Map Coast Partnership hosted its third user conference on subaqueous soils and sediment at URI Coastal Institute on February 23, 2006. Over 110 people attended the conference that featured talks from both of Rhode Island's Senators Jack Reed and Lincoln Chafee who talked about their support for MapCoast. Also attending the conference was Dr. William Puckett, Deputy Chief for Soil Survey & Resource Assessment, Michael Golden, Director of the Soil Survey Division, and Howard Hankin, National Aquatic Ecologist. Michael Golden provided a talk on the National Cooperative Soil Survey and information about the soil survey program. Articles about the conference were printed in the Providence Journal and local papers.

**Soil Resource Assistance:** The soil program is responsible for providing technical assistance to the NRCS farm planners, conservation district, and cooperators. Examples of assistance provided by the soil staff includes wetland (hydric soil) delineation, determining soil suitability for

engineering designs, providing ratings of soils for agricultural importance for the Farm and Ranchland Preservation Program, and providing educational outreach.

**Cooperative Soil Survey Updates:** The National Cooperative Soil Survey is undergoing reorganization that will utilize the Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) approach to better organize the soil data based on areas of similar soil, vegetation, geology, and land-uses rather than the traditional method of each State being responsible for the soil survey. It is hoped that utilizing this MLRA approach that soil data will be collected more efficiently, the maps will have perfect joins along State boundaries, and the soil scientists will have a long-term location rather than having to move each time a survey is completed. A meeting of the MO-12 (Northeastern States) Board of Directors was held in December with the goal of deciding on the locations of the MLRA office within the region. It was agreed that eleven MLRA offices would be established throughout the region. The office responsible for the terrestrial areas of Rhode Island will be located in Windsor Connecticut. This office will be responsible for approximately 12.5 million acres in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and New York. A special project office for coastal and sub-aqueous soils will be established in Rhode Island.

This is the activities report for NRCS Rhode Island. If you have any questions or need further information, please let me know.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Roylene Rides at the Door", is written on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

ROYLENE RIDES AT THE DOOR  
State Conservationist